

CASCADE STYLE BONSAI

Chapter 8

NOTES

I. OBJECTIVES

As a result of studying this section of the *Intermediate Bonsai Syllabus*, viewing audio visual presentations, or participating in other activities provided by an instructor, you will be able to:

1. Describe the principal identifying features of *cascade* style bonsai which distinguish it from other bonsai styles.
2. Explain the difference between a *formal* and an *informal* cascade bonsai.
3. Using an appropriate stock plant, create a *cascade* style bonsai in training.

II. GENERAL

- A. A *cascade* bonsai is one in which the trunk begins growing upward but **abruptly turns downward** and cascades to a point below the bottom of the container.
- B. Bonsai created in the *cascade* style resemble trees growing on steep slopes in mountainous areas, in ravines, or along drainage ditches.
 1. As the tree grows, matures and gets heavier, gravity may have pulled it over, leaving its roots intact.
 2. The weight and volume of grape vines or other climbing vines may cause the tree to tip over.
 3. Soil around the roots may erode and the tree tips over and down a slope.



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4. A snow, ice, mud or rock slide may knock the tree over, but its roots cling to the slope.

III. FORMAL CASCADE STYLE BONSAI DEFINED

A. The tree has one or more cascading trunk lines as well as a branch which has been trained as an **small upright tree**. The top of the tree, the base of the trunk, the bottom center of the container and the tip of the cascade are **in line** as viewed from the front.

B. Trunk and Branches

1. The small upright tree forming the apex should grow from the **top of the arch** of the cascading trunk, preferably from the highest point of the arch.
 - a. The **trunk** of the small upright tree forming the apex should be curved to complement the curves of the cascade.
 - b. The apex of this small upright tree should be over the cascade's center trunk/pot line.
 - c. Its **primary branches** should be positioned and trained as on an informal upright tree.
2. The initial angle of descent is about 45 degrees.
3. Further down the cascade the angle of descent may be as much as 90 degrees.
4. The tip of the cascade flares upward in search of the light.

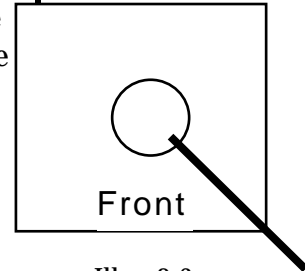


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Cascade Style Bonsai, Continued

NOTES

5. The **front of a cascade** is located about 45 degrees to the left or to the right of the trunk where it passes over the lip of the container.
6. The **arch of the cascade** crosses the lip of the container at or near a corner and/or over a foot of the container.



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C. The container should be deeper than it is long or wide.

IV. INFORMAL or VERTICAL CASCADE STYLE BONSAI DEFINED

- A. The tree has one or more cascading trunk lines with no upward growth.
- B. Trunk
 1. The base of the trunk, the bottom center of the container and the tip of the cascade are **in line** as viewed from the front.

2. The initial **angle of descent** is 45 to 90 degrees.
3. The angle of descent may change in the lower section of the cascade to achieve a proper balance point.
4. The **tip** of the cascade flares upward.
5. The **front** of a cascade is located about 45 degrees to the left or to the right of the trunk where it passes over the lip of the container.



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6. The **arch** of the cascade crosses the lip of the container at or near a corner and/or over a foot of the container.

C. The container should be deeper than it is long or wide.

V. STYLING THE TREE

A. Selecting material

1. Select a species which will **tolerate growing downward**; one which grows prostrate (reclining, trailing and earth hugging) naturally such as a juniper procumbens nana.
2. The specimen selected should have a **strong branch** or trunk which can be grown in a prostrate attitude.
 - a. The trunk/branch should have a **sharp bend** a short distance above the roots, or be flexible enough that a sharp bend can be created.
 - b. The branch/trunk should have interesting **curves**.
 - c. The branch/trunk should have adequate **secondary branches** which can be trained as side branches.

B. Determine the tree's **front** by observing root structure and the main trunk line. The first left or right curve should be towards the viewer with the trunk line positioned about 45 degrees to the left or to the right as viewed from the front of the container.

C. If the bonsai is to be a **formal style**, select a branch near the top of the arch of the main trunk. This will be trained as the new upright-growing apex.

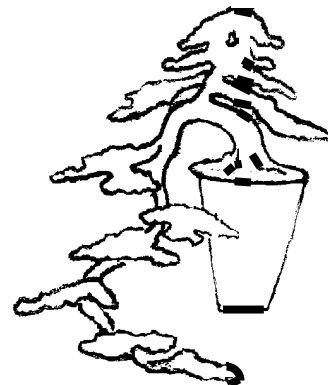
D. **Wire** and bend the main trunk to the desired position.

1. The **first bend** on the main trunk below the arch should be towards the center of the composition.
2. The **initial angle of descent** is between 45 degrees and 90 degrees depending on the style. However, the trunk will slightly serpentine in towards the container and out away from the container.

3. The trunk should **serpentine** to the left and to the right as it descends.
4. The **last curve** in the trunk should be towards the viewer and towards the center of the container.
5. **Multiple trunk** cascades will have proportions similar to those of a multiple trunk upright bonsai:
 - a. Vary in **girth**; the shorter being of smaller girth.
 - b. Vary in **length**, the shorter being either $\frac{1}{3}$ the length of the longer cascade, or $\frac{2}{3}$ the length of the longer cascade. (Never $\frac{1}{2}$ the length.)
 - c. The **junction** of the shorter cascade with the longer cascade should be relatively high in the composition.

E. Placement of **primary branches**.

1. Primary branches should **alternate** to the right and to the left of the trunk. Additionally, they should grow from the outside of the curves on the trunk.
2. There will seldom be any branches growing towards the **rear** of the composition. However an occasional short branch may be grown towards the front.
3. Primary and secondary branches will be wired so that they are **parallel** to the table/floor.
4. Several branches which are not being kept as live branches may be stripped and displayed as dead wood.



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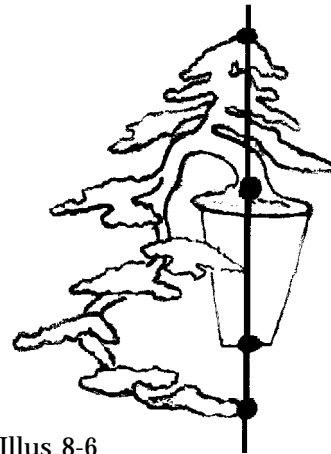
VI. POTTING THE TREE

A. Container selection

1. Cascade bonsai use **deep containers**. The depth depends on the size and style of the bonsai.
 - a. The **container depth** should be more than or less than, but not equal to, the length of the cascade.
 - b. Additionally, if there is an upright tree above the cascade, the **container depth** should be more than or less than, but not equal to, the height of that upright tree.
 - c. The container for a cascade may look best if it is shorter than the length of the cascading branch or shorter than the height of the tree when the tree is rugged looking with a heavy trunk. A **short stocky tree** looks best in a short stocky container.
 - d. A more **graceful, younger** or sparsely foliated cascade looks best in a taller container.
2. The **diameter** of the cascade container should be figured by totalling the following measurements:
 - a. The space which the anchor root takes up on the back side of the tree,
 - b. Plus the trunk diameter,
 - c. Plus the distance between the trunk and the cascading branch.
 - d. These three measurements equal the approximate diameter of the pot.

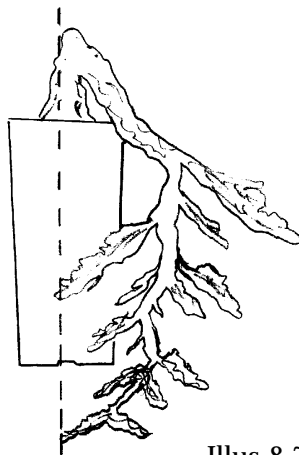
B. Potting

1. Position the **base of the tree** in the center of or slightly forward in the container.
2. Position the **apex in formal cascades** to align with the center line of the container.



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3. Position the tip of the **arch in vertical cascades** to align with the center line of the container.



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4. The trunk should not touch the **rim** of the container.
5. Position the **main descending trunk** over the corner/foot of the container. The trunk does not come down the front/center of the container because:
 - a. It would conceal the trunk's base and rootage.
 - b. The attractive first curve would not be shown to advantage.

- c. The surface of the container would be concealed.
- d. It would be too symmetrical.
- 6. Complete the potting process.
- C. Maintenance. If the lower end of the cascade appears to be weak:
 - 1. Each day after watering lay the tree and its pot on its side with the cascading branch facing up and horizontal.
 - 2. When fertilizing, **foliar feed** the lower end of the cascade.

VII. DISPLAYING CASCADE STYLE BONSAI

- A. Display on a **tall, slender stand** to complement the tree and the container's vertical line.
- B. Use a light and open stand to maximize the hanging effect.
- C. The **height** of the stand either should be shorter or taller than the height of the container, but not equal to the height of the container.

VIII. SUMMARY

- A. Various forces in nature can create a cascade style tree.
- B. A bonsai styled as a cascade may be a *formal* cascade with a branch trained as a small upright tree at the apex, or as an *informal* cascade bonsai with a bare apex.
- C. Cascade bonsai are planted in a container which is deeper than it is wide.